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By Mr. T O W N,
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[A very uncommon though just vein of thought, runs through the following letter. I shall add nothing more in recommendation of it, but only assure my correspondent that I shall be very glad to hear from him again.]

Ætatis cujusque notandi sunt tibi mores. HOR.

To Mr. T O W N.

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NOTHING appears to me to be more necessary in order to wear off any particularities in our behaviour, or to root out any perverseness in our opinions, than mixing with persons of ages and occupations different from our own. Whosoever confines himself entirely to the society of those who are engaged in the same pursuits,

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and whose thoughts naturally take the same turn with his own, acquires a certain stiffness and pedantry of behaviour, which is sure to make him disagreeable, except in one particular set of company. Instead of cramping the mind by keeping it within so narrow a circle, we should endeavour to enlarge it by every worthy notion and accomplishment; and temper each qualification with its opposite, as the four elements are compounded in our natural frame.

THE necessity of this free conversation, to open and improve the mind, is evident from the consequences, which always follow a neglect of it. The employment each man follows, wholly engrosses his attention, and tinges the mind with a peculiar die, which shews itself in all the operations of it, unless prevented by natural good sense and liberal education. The physician, the lawyer, and the tradesman will appear in company, though none of those occupations are the subject of discourse; and the clergyman will grow morose and severe, who seldom or never converses with the laity. But if no particular profession has this influence over us, some darling passion or amusement gives a colour to our thoughts and actions, and makes us odious, or at least ridiculous. Fine ladies for instance, by despising the conversation of sensible men, can talk of nothing but routes, balls, assemblies, birth-day suits, and intrigues; and fine gentlemen, for the same reason, of almost nothing at all. In like manner, the furious partizan, who has not been weaned from a mad attachment to particular principles, is weak enough to imagine every man of a different way of thinking a fool and a scoundrel; and the sectary or zealot devotes to eternal damnation all those, who will not go to heaven in the same road with himself, under the guidance
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of *Whitefield*, *Wesley*, or *Count Zinzendorf*. To the same cause we owe the rough country squire, whose ideas are wholly bent on guns, dogs, horses, and game; and who has every thing about him of a piece with his diversions. His hall must be adorned with stags heads instead of busts and statues, and in the room of family pictures, you will see prints of the most famous stallions and race-horses: all his doors open and shut with foxes feet, and even the buttons of his cloaths are impressed with the figures of dogs, foxes, stags, and horses. To this absurd practice of cultivating only one set of ideas, and shutting ourselves out from any intercourse with the rest of the world, is owing that narrowness of mind which has infected the conversations of the polite world with insipidity, made roughness and brutality the characteristics of a mere country gentleman, and produced the most fatal consequences in politics and religion.

BUT if this commerce with the generality of mankind is so necessary to remove any impressions, which we may be liable to receive from any particular employment or darling amusement, what precautions ought to be used, in order to remedy the inconveniences naturally brought on us by the different ages of life! It is not certain that a person will be engaged in any profession, or given up to any peculiar kind of pleasure, but the mind of every man is subject to the inclinations arising from the several stages of his existence, as well as his body to chronical distempers. This indeed, Mr. TOWN, is the principal cause of my writing to you, for it has often given me great concern to see the present division between the young and the old; to observe elderly men forming themselves into clubs and societies, that they may be more securely separated from youth; and to see
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young men running into dissipation and debauchery, rather than associate with age. If each party would labour to conform to the other, from such a coalition many advantages would accrue to both. Our youth would be instructed by the experience of age, and lose much of that severity, which they retain too long: while at the same time the wrinkled brow of the aged would be smoothed by the sprightly cheerfulness of youth; by which they might supply the want of spirits, forget the loss of old friends, and bear with ease all their worldly misfortunes. It is remarkable, that those young men are the most worthy and sensible, who have kept up any intercourse with the old; and that those old men are of the most cheerful and amiable disposition, who have not been ashamed to converse with the young.

I WILL not pretend to decide which party is most blameable in neglecting this necessary commerce between each other, which, if properly managed, would be at once so beneficial and delightful: but it undoubtedly arises from a certain selfishness and obstinacy in both, which will not suffer them to make a mutual allowance for the natural difference of their dispositions. Their inclinations are indeed as different as their years; yet each expects the other to comply, though neither will make any advances. How rarely do we see the least degree of society preserved between a father and son! a shocking reflection, when we consider that nature has endeavoured to unite them by parental affection on one side, and filial gratitude on the other. Yet a father and son as seldom live together with any tolerable harmony as a husband and wife; and chiefly for the same reason: for though they are both joined under the same yoke, yet they
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are each tugging different ways. A father might as well expect his son to be as gouty and infirm as himself, as to have the disposition which he has contracted from age : and a son might as reasonably desire the vigour and vivacity of five and twenty, as his own love of gaiety and diversions in his father. It is therefore plainly evident, that a mutual endeavour of conforming to each other is absolutely requisite to keep together the cement of natural affection, which the want of it so frequently dissolves : or at at least, if it does not disturb the affection, it constantly destroys the society between father and son.

THIS unhappy and unnatural division is often the subject of complaint in persons of both ages, but is still unremedied because they neither reflect on the cause whence it proceeds. Old men are perpetually commenting on the extreme levity of the times, and blaming the young, because they do not admire and court their company : which indeed is no wonder, since they generally treat their youthful companions as mere children, and expect such a slavish deference to their years, as destroys that equality by which cheerfulness and society subsists. Young men do not like to be chid by an ill-natur'd proverb, or reproved by a wrinkle : but though they do not chuse to be corrected by their grave seniors, like school-boys, they would be proud to consult them as friends ; which the injudicious severity of old age seldom will permit, not deigning to indulge them with so great a degree of freedom and familiarity. Youth, on the other hand, shun the company of age, complaining of the small regard and respect paid to them, though they often act with so little reserve and such unbecoming confidence as not to deserve it. Suppose the old were pleased with the natu-

ral flow of spirits and lively conversation of youth, still some respect may be challenged as due to them : nor should the decency and sobriety of their characters ever be insulted by any improper or immodest conversation.

I AM an old man myself, Mr. TOWN, and I have an only boy, whose behaviour to me is unexceptionable : permit me therefore to dwell a moment longer on my favourite subject, and I will conclude. With what harmony might all parents and children live together, if the father would strive to soften the rigour of age, and remember that his son must naturally possess those qualities, which ever accompany youth ; and if the son would in return endeavour to suit himself to those infirmities which his Father received from old age ! If they would reciprocally study to be agreeable to each other, the father would insensibly substitute affection in the room of authority, and lose the churlish severity and peevishness incident to his years : while the son would curb the unbecoming impetuosity of his youth, change his reluctance to obey into a constant attention to please, and remit much of his extreme gaiety in conformity to the gravity of his father. Wherever such a turn of mind is encouraged there must be happiness and agreeable society ; and the contrary qualities of youth and age, thus compounded, compose the surest cement of affection, as colours of the most opposite tints by a skilful mixture, each giving and receiving certain shades, will form a picture, the most heightened and exquisite in it's colouring.

I am, Sir,

Your most humble Servant,

JOHN BEVILL: